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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [MASS](#) [ECON](#) [PTER](#) [VE](#) [IR](#) [MX](#)
SUBJECT: MEXICO NOT LIKELY TO VOICE CONCERN OVER
VENEZUELA-IRAN TIES

REF: SECSTATE 61378

Classified By: MCPA CHARLES V. BARCLAY, Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: Political Counselor met with Mario Arriola Woog, SRE's Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean, on May 21 to emphasize that growing political, economic and commercial ties between Venezuela and Iran not only served to undermine international sanctions against the latter, but undercut efforts in recent years to reinforce hemispheric safeguards against international terrorism and transnational crime. Arriola briefly outlined Mexico's concerns with Venezuela and was receptive to the argument that its ties with Iran impact regional security. Nevertheless, he told Polcouns that Mexico intends to keep its rhetorical posture toward Venezuela low-key and suggested that specific charges Venezuela was helping Iran evade international sanctions be brought to the attention of the UNSC. End Summary.

12. (C) Arriola first questioned whether Venezuela-Iran ties were much more than a diplomatic poke in the U.S. eye by Presidents Chavez and Ahmedinejad. Their relationship serves no real practical purpose, he said. Furthermore, Mexico recognizes the right of every country to decide with whom to maintain ties. Drawing on talking points, Polcouns argued that the multiplicity of commercial, financial, energy and other exchanges in fact do make a difference: they offer an avenue by which Iran can circumvent the sanctions regime, provide Iran an opportunity to strengthen ties with illegal groups in the region, and undercut efforts to secure borders against the transit to and through of terrorists. Arriola conceded that there could be fallout from the growing relationship; Mexico would be interested in seeing specific examples of recent Iranian misdeeds in the hemisphere that were directly facilitated by its ties with Venezuela.

13. (C) Polcouns asked for an assessment of Venezuela's impact on Mexico's interests in the region. Arriola noted Mexico's commercial relationship with Venezuela and the fact that more Mexican investment was sunk there than in any other country in the region besides Brazil. Like the U.S., Mexico has specific interests to protect and wants to strike the right posture vis-a-vis Chavez in order to ensure the best cooperation it can get from an admittedly difficult leader. That said, Arriola continued, Mexico recognizes that Chavez's pretensions and authoritarian tendencies degrade Venezuelan democracy and impact Mexico's material interests in the country, as well as pose a potential challenge to Mexico's influence in the region. He described Central America, in

particular, as an area of rivalry between the two countries.

14. (C) Polcouns said the USG was reaching out to like-minded countries to encourage them to voice their own concerns in international forums. He also noted our ongoing concerns with Venezuela's shoddy management of travel documents and reiterated our interest in Mexico revising its visa policy for Venezuelan travelers. Arriola was non-committal in both regards. Specific charges of Venezuelan sanctions-busting should be raised in and addressed by the UN Security Council he said. Additionally, a stronger, more specific case against Iranian mischief in the region needs to be advanced. He sidestepped the issue of Venezuelan visas.

15. (C) Comment: Mexico's diplomatic default - sovereign rights, non-interference and conflict avoidance - remains salient within SRE, despite President Calderon's encouragement to better define and defend Mexico's interests in the region. Indeed, even though it harbors specific concerns regarding Venezuela and has modest expectations for improving relations, the Calderon administration wants to end the public feuding that characterized President Fox's posture toward both Cuba and Venezuela. Absent direct evidence of Iran using its Venezuela ties to plan or facilitate terrorist acts in the region, Mexico is not likely to publicly voice concern. End Comment.

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